

Message Text

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E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: PINT MP
SUBJECT: PRE-ELECTION ROUNDUP: DECEMBER 10

REF: (A) PORT LOUIS 1072, (B) PORT LOUIS 1042, (C) PORT LOUIS 1086

SUMMARY: THE INDEPENDENCE PARTY (IP) STEPPED UP ITS CAMPAIGN DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS, HITTING HARD BY BOTH RADIO-TELEVISION AND IN PUBLIC RALLIES ON THE THEMES OF THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE GOM UNDER THE GUIDANCE OF THE LABOR PARTY DURING THE PAST NINE YEARS, AID BY "EXTERNAL FORCES" (SOVIET) TO ITS PARTY'S ENEMIES (THE MMM), AND THE COMMUNISTIC-TOTALITARIANISM OF THE MMM, RAMGOOLAM ANNOUNCED ON TELEVISION DECEMBER 9 THAT IF THE IP IS RETURNED TO POWER, IT WILL MAKE SECONDARY AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION FREE FOR ALL MAURITIANS. THE MMM CONCENTRATED ITS CAMPAIGN ON DENOUNCING THE LABOR-PMSD " PRE-ELECTORAL AGREEMENT," AND LABOR-PMSD RESORT TO VIOLENCE AND REPRESSION IN THE PAST WHEN THEIR COALITION CONTROLLED THE GOVERNMENT. IT CLAIMED THAT THE MMM WOULD BE THE BEST GUARANTEE OF LIBERTY. THE PMSD BEGAN TO EXPERIENCE DIFFICULTIES IN ITS CAMPAIGN, WITH SIX OF ITS CANDIDATES BEING WITHDRAWN FROM THE RACE AND ITS LEADER, DUVAL, ADMITTING THAT HE WAS GOING TO HAVE A HARD FIGHT TO WIN IN HIS DISTRICT. THE SMALLER PARTIES WERE DOING POORLY, THOUGH ONE PAPER BELIEVED THE IFB MAY SUCCEED IN ELECTING SOME OF ITS CANDIDATES. BOOKMAKERS WERE GIVING STRONG ODDS THAT THE IP WOULD WIN MORE SEATS THAN ANY OTHER

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PARTY, BUT GAVE EVEN ODDS THAT THE MMM WOULD WIN MORE THAN 15 SEATS. END SUMMARY

1. THE NATION-WIDE RADIO-TV POLITICAL PARTY BROADCASTS USING GOM-ALLOTTED TIME (REF B) BEGAN ON DECEMBER 6. PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM LED OFF WITH A FIFTEEN-MINUTE SPEECH WHICH HE READ IN A LESS THAN FORCEFUL MANNER, SPEAKING IN A CREOLE WHICH WAS COMPREHENSIBLE BUT LACKING IN FIRE. RAM FOCUSED ON THE ACCOMPLISHMENTS OF THE LABOR PARTY IN GIVING THE COUNTRY ECONOMIC PROSPERITY AND SOCIAL PROGRESS, AND OFFERED THE VOTERS A CONTINUATION OF "HUMANE SOCIALISM." HE CHARGED THAT HIS PARTY'S OPPONENTS WILL USE ANY MEANS TO TAKE POWER AND WISH SIMPLY TO SATISFY THEIR PERSONAL AMBITIONS BY SOWING DIVISIONS AND "DESTROYING THE UNITY OF THE MAURITIAN FAMILY." IN THE IP'S SECOND TV BROADCAST LABOR PARTY SECRETARY-GENERAL JAGATSINGH STRESSED THE GOVERNMENT'S PERFORMANCE IN SOLVING THE PROBLEM OF 45,000 UNEMPLOYED IT WAS FACED WITH WHEN IT CAME TO POWER. IT HAS CREATED 60,000 JOBS SINCE INDEPENDENCE AND PLANS TO CREATE 75,000 MORE JOBS UNDER THE NEW PLAN. AND ON THE THIRD EVENING OF POLITICAL BROADCASTS, THE IP HAD A FIVE-MINUTE PROFESSIONALLY DONE PROGRAM CONSISTING OF BRIEF INTERVIEWS OF VARIOUS "TYPICAL" VOTERS REPRESENTING ALL THE ISLAND'S COMMUNITIES -- AND HEAVILY WEIGHTED TOWARD THE YOUNG AND WORKING-CLASS (WHICH THE IP FEARS ARE GOING OVER TO THE MMM) STATING WHY THEY WILL VOTE FOR THE IP. IT WAS AN EFFECTIVE, SKILLFUL EFFORT.

2. PRIME MINISTER RAMGOOLAM ANNOUNCED ON TV THE EVENING OF 9 DECEMBER THAT IF THE IP IS RETURNED TO POWER IT WILL MAKE SECONDARY AND UNIVERSITY EDUCATION IS ALREADY FREE. HE SAID MAURITIUS WOULD BE THE FIRST THIRD WORLD COUNTRY TO HAVE FREE EDUCATION AT ALL LEVELS. (COMMENT: HE GAVE NO ESTIMATE OF THE COST. IT IS BOUND TO BE HIGH, AS A GREAT DEAL OF SECONDARY EDUCATION IS NOW PRIVATE, AND MANY MAURITIANS DO NOT CONTINUE BEYOND PRIMARY SCHOOL BECAUSE THEY CANNOT AFFORD IT. THIS WILL BE A POPULAR MEASURE, DESPITE ITS BEING SEEN AS A PLOY TO WIN VOTES.) RAMGOOLAM AND ATTORNEY GENERAL GURBURN TOLD THE AMBASSADOR PRIOR TO THE BROADCAST THAT THE PRIME MINISTER'S ANNOUNCEMENT WOULD BE A "BOMB" WHICH WOULD WIN THE IP MANY LIMITED OFFICIAL USE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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VOTES.)

3. ELSEWHERE THE IP WAS SHOWING SIGNS OF MOVING ITS CAMPAIGN INTO A HIGHER GEAR, ORGANIZING MORE RALLIES AND APPEALING FOR FUNDS. IN A MEETING WITH THE PRESS ON DECEMBER 6, PT SECRETARY-GENERAL JAGATSINGH APPEALED FOR CONTRIBUTIONS IN CASH AND IN KIND TO THE PARTY'S COFFERS. HE ASKED ESPECIALLY FOR THE LOAN OF CARS FOR USE BY THE PARTY. THE NEXT DAY AT AN IP RALLY IN BEAU BASSIN RAMGOOLAM TALKED OF HIS PARTY'S LACK OF RESOURCES, COMPARED WITH THE LARGE SUMS APPARENTLY

AVAILABLE TO THE OTHER PARTIES. HE SAID THIS INDICATED THAT "EXTERNAL FORCES" ARE EXPLOITING THESE MAURITIAN PARTIES IN ORDER TO DESTROY THE LABOR PARTY, BECAUSE THEY DON'T WANT TO SEE A STRONG AND FREE MAURITIUS (SEE REF C FOR A FULLER ACCOUNT OF THIS SPEECH). RAMGOOLAM DENIED THAT THERE IS ANY AGREEMENT BETWEEN HIS PARTY AND THE PMSD. RAM REPEATED HIS DENIAL AT A MEETING IN FLACQ ON SUNDAY, WHERE HE ALSO MENTIONED AGAIN FOREIGN INTEREST IN THE MAURITIAN ELECTION. HE SAID: "A NUMBER OF COUNTRIES DID NOT LOOK KINDLY ON THE CHOICE OF MAURITIUS AND ITS PRIME MINISTER AS PRESIDENT OF THE OAU. THERE WERE MANY WHO PREFERRED THAT MAURITIUS REMAIN CALM AND NOT TAKE PART IN THE DEBATES WHEN SERIOUS QUESTIONS ARE DISCUSSED AT THE UN AND IN THE SECURITY COUNCIL, WHERE MAURITIUS WILL SIT FOR TWO YEARS." AND FINALLY, AT A RALLY IN HIS HOME DISTRICT OF QUARTIER MILITAIRE, FINANCE MINISTER RINGADOO ATTACKED THE MMM AS A COMMUNIST PARTY WHICH IS RESORTING TO VIOLENCE TO GAIN POWER. HE SAID THE MMM WOULD ESTABLISH A TOTALITARIAN SYSTEM SUCH AS EXISTS IN COMMUNIST COUNTRIES AND WOULD DESTROY MAURITIUS' POLITICAL AND RELIGIOUS FREEDOMS.

4. THE IP MAY HAVE STRENGTHENED ITS POSITION SOMEWHAT DURING THE PAST SEVERAL DAYS BY RAMGOOLAM'S REQUESTING AND RECEIVING MINISTER OF FISHERIES MODUN'S RESIGNATION (REF B). MODUN, WHO IS RUNNING AS AN INDEPENDENT IN THE PRIME MINISTER'S DISTRICT, TOLD THE PRESS THAT HE HAD NO RANCOR FOR THE PRIME MINISTER NOR ANY OF HIS OTHER FORMER CABINET COLLEAGUES. IN ANOTHER HELPFUL DEVELOPMENT RAJ SOOKOOL, A VAISH LEADER WHO WAS RUNNING AS AN INDEPENDENT IN THE DISTRICT OF BOOLELL AND JAGATSINGH, WITHDREW FROM THE CAMPAIGN ON DECEMBER 8 AFTER ANNOUNCING, AT A PRESS CONFERENCE HELD IN JAGATSINGH'S LIMITED OFFICIAL USE
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OFFICE, THAT THE VAISH CASTE HAS THIRTEEN CANDIDATES RUNNING UNDER THE IP BANNER AND ALL VAISH SHOULD THEREFORE SUPPORT THE IP. HE DENIED HAVING BEEN PROMISED ANYTHING TO WITHDRAW. (THE VAISH FORM THE LARGEST HINDU CASTE IN MAURITIUS.)

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5. ON THE MMM CAMPAIGN FRONT, BERENGER, JUGNAUTH AND BHAYAT SPOKE ON THE FIRST MMM TELEVISION PROGRAM. THEY DENOUNCED THE LABOR-PMSD "PRE-ELECTORAL AGREEMENT" WHOSE SOLE AID IS TO "SOW FEAR AMONG THE MAURITIAN POPULACE." THEY ALSO DENOUNCED THEIR ADVERSARIES' "RESORT TO VIOLENCE." THE MMM SPEAKERS SAID THEY ARE THE TRUE SOCIALISTS WHO ARE TRYING TO HELP THE WORKING PEOPLE. THEY ACCUSED THE LABOR PARTY OF HAVING BETRAYED THE WORKERS AFTER GAINING THEIR SUPPORT IN 1967 WITH PROMISES THEY NEVER KEPT, AS THEY SOLD OUT THE COUNTRY TO THE CAPITALISTS. BERENGER SAID THE MMM'S OPPONENTS WERE RUNNING A "FEAR CAMPAIGN" IN ACCUSING THE MMM OF BEING A COMMUNIST PARTY, JUST AS THE PMSD HAD RUN A FEAR CAMPAIGN AGAINST INDEPENDENCE IN 1967, EQUATING INDEPENDENCE WITH FAMINE.

6. COMMENTING ON THE MMM'S FIRST TV BROADCAST, L'EXPRESS SAID THE THREE MMM LEADERS SUCCEEDED IN PROJECTING AN IMAGE OF YOUTH, DYNAMISM AND SERIOUSNESS, AS THEY INTENDED. VIEWERS WERE NOT, HOWEVER, GIVEN MUCH OF AN INDICATION OF THE "SOCIALIST AND FREE SOCIETY" THAT THE MMM PROMISES TO INSTALL. ALSO, THE MMM LEADERS SEEMED TO BE ON THE DEFENSIVE, CLAIMING TO BE THE TRUE SOCIALISTS, DENYING THE PARTY IS COMMUNIST, AND COMPLAINING ABOUT VIOLENCE. (LE MILITANT CHARGED PMSD THUGS BEAT UP TWO OF ITS SUPPORTERS. ONE REQUIRED SURGERY.)

7. PAUL BERENGER SPOKE ALONE FOR TEN MINUTES FOR THE MMM
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ON THE THIRD EVENING OF THE TV BROADCASTS, IN A QUIET BUT FORCEFUL AND ARTICULATE CREOLE. HE EMPHASIZED THE PAST REPRESSION OF HIS PARTY'S ACTIVITIES AND PERSONNEL WITH SOME PASSION, A THEME WHICH DOUBTLESS APPEALS TO THE MILITANTS OF THE PARTY BUT WHICH MAY NOT AROUSE MUCH MORE THAN A LITTLE SYMPATHY AMONG THE POPULACE AT LARGE. BERENGER RECALLED THE YEARS OF THE PMSD-LABOR COALITION, WHEN "REPRESSION,

DICTATORSHIP AND VIOLENCE" WERE THE RULE. HE CITED THE POSTPONEMENT OF ELECTIONS, THE ENDING OF BY-ELECTIONS AFTER THE MMM WON A GREAT VICTORY AT TRIOLET, THE BOYCOTTING OF CERTAIN OPPOSITION PAPERS, THE IMPRISONMENT OF MMM AND LABOR UNION MILITANTS, AND THE DECLARATION OF CERTAIN STRIKES TO BE ILLEGAL. WITHOUT THE MMM TO DEFEND LIBERTY AND DEMOCRACY THE SITUATION WOULD HAVE BEEN WORSE, HE SAID. NOW A NEW PMSD-LABOR COALITION IS PLANNED, AND A REPETITION OF PAST REPRESSION CAN BE EXPECTED. BERENGER DENIED THE MMM IS A COMMUNIST PARTY AND SAID TO THE CONTRARY IT IS THE BEST GUARANTEE OF LIBERTY. (THE PRESS SAYS THIS IS THE FIRST TIME BERENGER HAS MADE SUCH A FLAT PUBLIC DENIAL.)

8. L'EXPRESS REPORTED THAT RAM PYNDIAH, RINGADOO'S ERRATIC BROTHER-IN-LAW AND POLITICAL OPPONENT, ADDRESSED A MEETING ATTENDED BY 1200 MMM SYMPATHIZERS IN HIS DISTRICT OF QUARTIER MILITAIRE AND WAS "QUITE AS A LAMB," GIVING A "SERIOUS AND PONDEROUS" CRITICISM OF THE GOVERNMENT WITHOUT MENTIONING ANY PERSONALITIES.

9. THE PMSD BEGAN EXPERIENCING DIFFICULTIES IN ITS CAMPAIGN. DUVAL ADMITTED IN A SPEECH ON DECEMBER 7 THAT HE WAS GOING TO HAVE A CLOSE RACE IN THE DISTRICT IN WHICH HE IS RUNNING, AND STATED HE WOULD HAVE TO SPEND MORE TIME THERE. IN AN ATTEMPT TO GIVE A BOOST TO THE PMSD ON RIDRIGUES ISLAND, DUVAL FLEW THERE ON DECEMBER 9 FOR A TWO-DAY VISIT. HE HAS ALSO AGREED TO APPEAR AT TWO PMSD RALLIES NEXT SUNDAY (DECEMBER 12) HELD AT DIFFERENT LOCATIONS IN MAURITIUS. (THE MMM AND IP ALSO ARE PLANNING LARGE RALLIES SUNDAY.) ON 9 DECEMBER SIX PMSD CANDIDATES WITHDREW FROM THE RACE, LEAVING ONLY 53 PMSD CONTESTANTS FOR SEATS, AND 364 CANDIDATES OF ALL PARTIES STILL IN THE RACE. PARTY LEADER DUVAL, IN ANNOUNCING THE WITHDRAWAL OF ALL SIX PMSD CANDIDATES IN THE LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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EASTERN DISTRICTS OF FLACQ-BON ACCUEIL AND VIEUX GRAND PORT-ROSE BELLE, CALLED ON ALL PMSD SUPPORTERS THERE TO VOTE FOR THE IFB CANDIDATES. HE GAVE THE SAME ADVICE TO PMSD VOTERS IN THE MONTAGNE BLANCHE DISTRICT (FIDT OF BOOLELL AND JAGATSINGH OF THE LABOR PARTY) WHERE THE PMSD HAD FAILED TO REGISTER ITS CANDIDATES (OWING TO THE "TREASON" OF ONE OF THEM, ACCORDING TO DUVAL). DUVAL SAID THIS DECISION TO SUPPORT THE IFB WAS TAKEN AFTER AN EVALUATION OF THE CHANCES OF THE VARIOUS CANDIDATES AND IN ORDER "TO BLOCK COMMUNISM AND TO PREVENT THE RE-ELECTION OF THE LABOR PARTY."

10. THE SMALLER PARTIES ARE DOING POORLY. CONSERVATIVE LE CERNEEN STATED THAT THE SMALL PARTIES FACE "CERTAIN DEATH"

IN THE ELECTIONS. THEY ARE UNABLE, ACCORDING TO THE PAPER, TO ATTRACT MORE THAN A HANDFUL OF LISTENERS TO THEIR MEETINGS. ONLY THE IP, THE PMSD AND THE MMM HAVE A CHANCE, THOUGH IN SOME RURAL DISTRICTS THE IFB MAY SUCCEED IN ELECTING SOME OF ITS CANDIDATES. THE UDM, THOUGH IT HAS SOME GOOD MEN RUNNING, HAS LITTLE SUPPORT BECAUSE URBAN PEOPLE KNOW THAT ANY STRENGTH DRAWN AWAY FROM THE PMSD TOWARD THE UDM SIMPLY HELPS THE COMMUNISTS (MMM).

11. THE GOVERNMENT IS REPORTEDLY CONSIDERING IMPOSING A CURFEW AT 7 P.M. ON ELECTION DAY, DECEMBER 20, ONE HOUR AFTER THE POLLS CLOSE. THIS IS TO MAINTAIN ORDER WHILE VOTES ARE COUNTED. OPPOSITION PARTIES ARE WARY, AS THEY THINK THIS WOULD GIVE THE GOVERNMENT AN OPPORTUNITY TO TAMPER WITH THE RESULTS.

12. AND, FINALLY, WORD FROM PORT LOUIS BOOKMAKERS, ACCORDING TO L'EXPRESS, IS THAT THE IP IS STRONGLY FAVORED TO WIN MORE SEATS THAN ANY OTHER PARTY. THEY ARE GIVING EVEN ODDS THAT THE MMM WILL WIN MORE THAN 15 SEATS AND THAT THE MMM WILL WIN MORE SEATS THAN THE PMSD.

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